

New Europe College  
*Ștefan Odobleja* Program  
Yearbook 2015-2016



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This volume was published within the Human Resources Program – PN II, implemented with the support of the Ministry of National Education – The Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding (MEN – UEFISCDI), project code PN–II– RU–BSO-2015

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ISSN 1584-0298  
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# THE MYSTERY OF THE HUMAN BEING IN AUGUSTINE: IN QUEST OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN APOPHATIC ANTHROPOLOGY

**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to examine whether and in what sense one could identify an apophatic approach to the human being in Augustine's writings. It also explores the relationship between the negative theology and the negative anthropology in Augustine's thinking. Augustine's conception of human interiority as dwelling place of the divine, his reflections on the deepness of the heart, on illumination, on transfiguration through love or divinisation of the human being, bring to light fundamental traits of a genuine apophatic discourse.

**Keywords:** Apophatic theology, apophatic anthropology, ineffability, unknowability, interiority, heart, illumination, love, charity, divinisation, image, likeness.

## I. Fragile Beauty and Beautiful Difficulty

We are used to tackling Augustine's vision of the human being through certain thematic constellations and pre-established conceptual distinctions. We speak of the human being as a composite of body and soul,<sup>1</sup> or as being caught in the dichotomy flesh-spirit.<sup>2</sup> We speak of man's inner constitution, of levels of interiority or subjectivity.<sup>3</sup> We speak of mind and heart,<sup>4</sup> bodily senses and spiritual senses,<sup>5</sup> outer and inner man.<sup>6</sup> Even when dualist logic is overcome by triadic structures – such as: memory, intelligence, will – we are still in the same effort of classification and systematisation. We may collect and interpret passages on consciousness, self-awareness and self-knowledge. We can see the Augustinian man through the debates on free will and grace,<sup>7</sup> or we can go through his consideration of desire,<sup>8</sup> delight,<sup>9</sup> love and gift.<sup>10</sup> The self of the *cogito*<sup>11</sup>

and the “I” of prayer,<sup>12</sup> confession<sup>13</sup> and praise<sup>14</sup> may constitute complex and delicate viewpoints to focus on Augustinian anthropology. They are not mutually exclusive and they can illuminate different facets of the Augustinian self.

All these themes (and many possible others) propose an interesting mapping of Augustine’s complex view on the realities of the human being. And yet, the human being is not fully expressed or described through such thematic investigations. There is always an excess that cannot be exhausted through such an approach to the human being. There is always something deeper in man, transcending man, granting the particularity and unity of the human being, something that goes above and beyond these thematic constellations. We search for the wholeness, coherence and sense of the human being, and yet we are confronted with incomprehensibility, ineffability, unfathomable depth, hiddenness and mystery.

In this paper, I will argue that one has to disclose and assume the incomprehensibility of man in Augustine’s thinking –and that a certain apophatic attitude is not only present, but indeed crucial to Augustine’s anthropology. It is my deepest conviction that anthropological apophaticism might shed a new light on classical thematic approaches and pre-conceived ideas of Augustine’s theory of man, dismantling some of them, reconstructing others on new foundations, but inviting our current understanding to embrace the exercise of wonder before the mystery of man.<sup>15</sup> To approach the fragile beauty of a human being’s mystery is, indeed, a difficult task – but also a fascinating one.

## **II. Research Questions**

Let us unfold the preliminary questions that guide the current investigation and inform our discourse on Augustine’s perspective on the human being. First of all, what is apophatic anthropology? Or rather, what is anthropological apophaticism? How can we define the apophatic approach to man, thinking along with Augustine and trying to read his works as a source of inspiration and reflection on this specific approach? What is the specificity of apophaticism when directed towards the human being, in comparison with the apophaticism defining our attitude towards God?

Secondly, how do we relate apophaticism to key-concepts concerning the level of speech (such as ineffable, inexpressible, indescribable,

unspeakable, unsayable), and respectively the level of knowledge (unknowable, incomprehensible, unfathomable, ungraspable)?

Thirdly, how is the vocabulary expressing negation (e.g., endless, impenetrable) related to the vocabulary expressing mystery (something inexpressible because hidden) and the vocabulary expressing puzzle/enigma/*aporia* (something inexpressible because it contains inner contradictions or is impossible to decipher in itself and from itself)?

In the fourth place, what is the relationship between the vocabulary of negation (non-...) and the vocabulary of eminence (beyond and above...) in Augustine's anthropological thought?

Finally, can we see the apophaticism of the person as intertwined with the apophaticism of relationship? How does the infinite reference to God – including the permanent searching-finding tension, the continuous longing, the endless loving knowledge and knowing love – trigger as necessary an apophatic approach to the relationship man-God?

### III. A Glimpse into Unfathomable Humanity

#### 1. *The ineffable receptacle of divine ineffability*

In *Exposition 2 on Psalm 101*, Augustine proposes an exegesis on the name of God revealed to Moses. It is one of his favourite themes, and he often comes back to propose a glimpse into the hidden meaning of the name of God. It is an occasion to contrast divine nature and human nature (in its worldly condition), and to underline the immeasurable and unimaginable greatness of God's "is", in contrast to any human affirmation of "is" in respect to one's own being.

He asked God's name not out of impertinent curiosity, but because he needed to know it for his ministry. *What shall I say to the sons of Israel if they challenge me, Who sent you to us?* Then the Creator named itself to the creature, God to a human being, the immortal to a mortal, the eternal to an ephemeral man: I AM WHO I AM, he said. (...) What a mighty 'is'! What an incomparably great 'is'! What is any human being beside that? A human being 'is' something, but what is he or she, alongside the great 'is'? Who can grasp that being? Who can share in it? Who pant for it, who aspire to it? In its presence, who dare even think he 'is'? But do not despair, frail humanity. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob (*Ex. 3:13-14*), he says. 'You have heard what I am in myself; listen

now to what I am for your sake.' That eternity has called us, for the word has burst forth from eternity. (*En. Ps.* 101.2.10, WSA III.19, 71).<sup>16</sup>

At first glance, the preference for antitheses suggests a very sharp ontological divide between God as Creator, immortal, eternal, and human being as creature, mortal and ephemeral. The rhetorical questions might suggest as an answer: "Nobody". And still there is a second possible answer: "the human being". From all the creatures, only the human being can aspire to know the Creator, to participate in immortality and eternity, to taste, by grace, the divine life. And as we shall see later in our analysis, the language of aspiration (longing)<sup>17</sup> and the language of participation (sharing in)<sup>18</sup> are used by Augustine to express the relationship between man and God. For now, as far as the cited passage is concerned, we can conclude: the unapproachable God, whose IS is incomprehensible by the limited human being,<sup>19</sup> can be approached, because God has approached man. Fragile humanity is thus not to fall in despair, not to feel crushed under the incomprehensible divine IS. For there is a call to eternity, for eternity is the vocation of the human being, for the Word "calls temporal creatures, and makes them eternal" (*En. Ps.* 101.2.10, WSA III.19, 71).

For reasons of exegetical systematisation, I propose to consider divine apophaticism<sup>20</sup> in Augustine's texts from the angle of three modes of discourse: the first, using the language of ineffability or inexpressibility,<sup>21</sup> the second, using the language of incomprehensibility or unknowability, and the third, centred on expressing the divine eminence.

### **a. The ineffable divinity**

Augustine frequently mentions the ineffability of God's substance, presence, communion within the Trinity, truth, light, greatness or beauty. First, ineffability is attributed to God's being or essence; God is presented as "an inexpressible substance", prior to all spaces and all times (*De Gen. ad litt.* 5.16.34, WSA I.13, 193), but ineffability is also chosen to characterize God's appearance and speaking in the vision of Moses: "So then, in that other way, in the form by which he is God, he speaks in an ineffably more secret and intimate way, in inexpressible words" (*De Gen. ad litt.* 12.27.55, WSA I.13, 496). *Ineffabilis* can be associated with divinity as truth: "the divine and inexpressible truth that is above us" (*De Trinitate* 5.1.2, WSA I.5, 189), and it is also appropriate to suggest an attitude of wonder and speechlessness before the divine light, "that inexpressible light" (*De Trinitate* 15.6.10, WSA I.5, 402).



The language of ineffability also accompanies the Trinitarian teaching of Augustine, both in the treaty *De Trinitate* and in private correspondence. The community granted by the Holy Spirit in the Trinitarian life is ineffable, and ineffable is also the mystery of the Person of the Holy Spirit: "So the Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son" (*De Trinitate* 5.11.12, WSA I.5, 197).<sup>22</sup> But the same embracing of the unsayable also applies when trying to point to the inseparability of the three divine Persons in only one divinity, whereas the one God is the "ineffably inseparable Trinity" (*Ep.* 120.3.13).<sup>23</sup> Moreover, each of the Three Persons has an "inexpressible majesty" (*Sermo* 52.17; WSA III.3, 58). The inadequacy of language to approach the Triune God is underlined at the end of *De Trinitate*, as Augustine evaluates his inability to say something worthy (*dignum*) of the "ineffability of that highest Trinity" (*illius summae trinitatis ineffabilitate*). (*De Trinitate* 15.27.50, FC 45, 92).<sup>24</sup>

Augustine's considerations on the creation as confessing the Creator permanently, silently, within a universal theophany and a cosmic liturgical praising, can also be connected to apophatic theological discourse:

For, quite apart from the voice of the prophets, the very order, changes and movements in the universe, the very beauty of form in all that is visible, proclaim, however silently, both that the world was created and also that its Creator could be none other than God whose greatness and beauty are both ineffable and invisible. (*De ciu. Dei* 11.4, FC 14, 191).

Ineffability is not only the condition of approaching God here and now, within the borders of imperfect humanity, but it will also qualify the vision and the knowledge of God in the restored and perfected humanity, in eternal life: "When, after all, will you say, 'This is what God is'? Not even when you see him, because what you will see is inexpressible." (*Sermo* 53.12, WSA III.3, 72).<sup>25</sup>

Not only attributes, but also names are powerless to convey the divine nature. Above all name and naming, the one named God is in fact the nameless, even though it can be attributed numberless beautiful, excellent, superlative names:<sup>26</sup>

whatever we name what cannot be named, whatever we want to name it, it is called God. And when we name it God, what have we named? Are these two syllables all that we are looking toward? Whatever we have been able to name it, then, is inferior. (*Io. Ep. Tr.* 4.6, WSA III.14, 70).

In Augustine's view, even to say that God is ineffable would contradict His ineffability. God is indeed beyond any human attempt to name His ineffability, to propose it as an attribute to the divine nature. Even when asserting the ineffability of God, speech remains ultimately inadequate. Thus, in *De doctrina christiana* 1.6.6, Augustine plays on the paradox of naming the inexpressible, on the *aporia* of expressing the inexpressibility, of speaking out the ineffability of God:

Have I said anything, solemnly uttered anything that is worthy of God? On the contrary, all I feel I have done is to wish to say something; but if I have said anything, it is not what I wished to say. How do I know this? I know it because God is inexpressible (*quia Deus ineffabilis est*); and if what has been said by me were inexpressible, it would not have been said. And from this it follows that God is not to be called inexpressible (*ne ineffabilis quidem dicendus est Deus*), because when even this is said about him, something is being expressed. And we are involved in heaven knows what kind of battle of words, since on the one hand what cannot be said is inexpressible, and on the other what can even be called inexpressible is thereby shown to be not inexpressible. This battle of words should be avoided by keeping silent, rather than resolved by the use of speech. (*Teaching Christianity*, WSA I.11, 108).<sup>27</sup>

### ***b. The unknowable divinity***

Another dimension of the apophatic approach to God is centred not on the failure of discourse to express what God is, but on the impossibility of the human capacities to fully comprehend the divine being, or even to think, to understand, to penetrate the divine works, judgements or love. Considerations of the unknowability or incomprehensibility of God can be linked to considerations of the incomprehensibility of the human intellect itself. In a sort of *a fortiori* argument, Augustine asserts that the Creator cannot be grasped if the created intellect, the faculty of human comprehension, is itself beyond grasp: "In any case, what intellectual capacity has a man got to grasp God with, if his own intellect with which he wishes to grasp him still eludes his grasp?" (*De Trinitate* 5.1.2, WSA 1.5, 190).

Augustine argues against any attempts to apply to God Aristotle's categories of accidental predication, for God is beyond the categories which apply to created substances (*De Trinitate* 5.1.2),<sup>28</sup> but also against thinking of God in terms of "spiritual conceptions" that might be subject to changeability (*De Trinitate* 8.2.3). In refusing the approach to God by

intellectual categories and concepts, one is at least aware of what one shouldn't think about God: "Whoever thinks of God like that may not yet be able to discover altogether what he is, but is at least piously on his guard against thinking about him anything that he is not." (*De Trinitate* 5.1.2, WSA 1.5, 190). The utility of the *via negativa* recommended here is asserted in terms of knowledge: "before we can know what God is, we are at least able to know what he is not." (*De Trinitate* 8.2.3, WSA 1.5, 243).<sup>29</sup>

Divinity is fundamentally beyond any human grasp, it cannot be constituted as an object of knowledge: "We are talking about God, so why be surprised if you cannot grasp it? I mean, if you can grasp it, it isn't God." (*Sermo* 117.5, WSA III.4, 211). Any knowledge that pretends to intellectual conceptualization is impossible, for it is impossible to circumscribe the un-circumscribable. Augustine continues: "Certainly it is great bliss to have a little touch or taste of God with the mind; but completely to grasp him, to comprehend him, is altogether impossible." (*Sermo* 117.5, WSA III.4, 211). The relationship between the human mind and God cannot be thought of in the logic of container-contained, but a certain approach and a certain knowledge of God is possible by spiritual experience, which Augustine suggests using terms related to the spiritual senses, mentioning touch, or taste or the mind's eye:

So what mind's eye will be able to grasp God, take all of him in? It is enough to touch his fringes, if the mind's eye is pure. But if it does touch upon him, it does so with a kind of immaterial and spiritual touch, but still does not embrace or comprehend him all; and that too, if the mind is pure. (*Sermo* 117.5, WSA III.4, 212).<sup>30</sup>

Speaking of the incomprehensible God supposes, for Augustine, not an abstract exercise of denying attributes, concepts, notions, names, a purely discursive game of negations, aimed to end in absolute silence or distance.<sup>31</sup> The use of negations, as sign of the awareness of God's transcending all intellectual categories, is the preliminary stage to acceding to another kind of approach of the unapproachable, by spiritual experience, through the spiritual senses. Without being an intellectual container that encompasses the essence of God, the human being – the human mind or mind's eye, in the terms of the *Sermo* 117 – can become a receptacle for what God reveals of Himself in human interiority, in privileged moments of great intimacy between man and God.

**c. Eminence and surpassing:**

Ungraspable in words, incomprehensible for human understanding, invisible, inexplicable, impenetrable,<sup>32</sup> God's presence can be suggested using the language of eminence and surpassing, sometimes articulated in paradoxical formulations, which try to transcend the limits of language by pushing language beyond self-contradiction. The human struggle to think and suggest through words God's eminence is a constant of Augustinian thinking from *De doctrina christiana* onwards:

All of them, however, put up a strenuous and zealous fight for God's excelling everything else there is; nor can any be found who suppose that God is something than which anything else is better. And so all agree that God is whatever they put above all other things. (I.7.7, WSA I.11, 109).

The superlative of hiddenness is the mode of manifestation of God, even in his most intense presence: "secretissime et presentissime – deeply hidden yet most intimately present" (*Conf.* 1.4.4, Chadwick 4-5). This extremely hidden and yet all-encompassing, all-penetrating presence is surpassing all interiority and elevation within the human being: "interior intimo meo et superior summo meo – more inward than my most inward part and higher than the highest element within me" (*Conf.* 3.6.11, Chadwick, 43).<sup>33</sup> Eventually, *Deus secretissimus* also surpasses any hiddenness of the inner man: "omni secreto interior – more inward than any secret recess" (*Conf.* 9.1.1, Chadwick, 155).

Eventually, eminence can be paired with unchangeability: "that supremely eminent and unchangeable nature" (*De Trinitate* 15.6.10, WSA I.5, 401). In fact, Augustine often insists on the immutability of God, especially when he discusses the significance of the name of God revealed to Moses in *Exodus*. The unbridgeable difference between the Creator and the created human self does not exclude a strong sense of proximity, of indwelling, of presence. "We observed it as both not being far away from us and yet being above us, not spatially, but in its august and marvellous eminence, and in such a way that it also seemed to be with or in us by the presence of its light." (*De Trinitate* 15.6.10, WSA I.5, 401). The paradox of the divine eminence, which is at the same time a paradox of human receptivity and openness to that divine eminence, is that the "above us" is not incompatible with the "with us" or "in us". Augustine considers that this paradox can be better expressed in terms of a light-presence. In

fact, divine eminence can be depicted in terms relating to light imagery, as “dazzling brilliance” (*De Trinitate* 15.6.10, WSA I.5, 402).

All these passages can be read, of course, as pointing to the mystery of the incomprehensible God, for which both the apophatic and the cataphatic way are inappropriate.<sup>34</sup> But most of them also hint, in a second moment, at the wonder of the human being who can be a receptacle for that eminent nature, for that most hidden and most secret presence, for that surpassing light. The mystery of the human being resides in the very fact that it can host, in his innermost realms, this intense presence of the secret God. This presence abides beyond the most profound subjective interiority or hiddenness, and above the most elevated subjective superiority. That descent of the divine hiddenness into human hiddenness, that presence of the divine secret to the human secret, that indwelling of the divine surpassing light in the human person are constitutive, fundamental for the human being. The human is thus disclosed as being essentially receptive and responsive to the divine hiddenness. Moreover, he is renewed, enlarged and deepened, through the work of grace, in his openness to the divine hiddenness. Therefore, an apophatic approach to God invites also, as a necessary counterpart, an apophatic approach to the human person, as the mystery of God imprints its reflection and finds its dwelling place in the mystery of man.<sup>35</sup>

## ***2. The divine secret of the hidden heart***

There is a lot of exegesis around the centrality of the heart in Augustine,<sup>36</sup> and a lot of positive affirmations can be gathered in order to characterize the potentialities, dispositions, attitudes, thoughts and works of the heart. Innumerable passages from Augustine’s works can support these affirmations on the understanding, the memory, the sensibility associated with the human heart. I will not propose revisiting them. Instead, I would like to insist on the passages supporting the idea that the human heart is, within the human constitution, the special *locus* inviting an apophatic attitude. Of the three types of discourse that characterised theological apophaticism, the one which can be most appropriately applied to the human being is that centred on unknowability,<sup>37</sup> with a special emphasis on deepness and inscrutability.

The unknowability of the human heart can have a double meaning. The first meaning refers to human sinfulness, imperfection and instability in the present world. The depth of the human heart is unknown even to

one's own spirit because one may never know what secret thoughts or impulses lie hidden in the heart, deeper than what can be grasped at the level of introspection and consciousness. The second meaning refers to the human heart as fundamentally unknowable because of reflecting a unique and ineffable relationship to the unknowable God. This unknowability is not confined to the any state of ignorance due to our imperfect, limited, mortal condition. On the contrary, it is preserved and even enhanced as the human being approaches the perfection of his being, being renewed so as to reach the perfection of the image of God. This second unknowability is in fact the original and primordial one as it expresses the true vocation of the human being, according to God's project of humanity. It not only transcends the limits of the fallen predicament, but also the limits of creaturliness, bringing before our feeble intuition the eschatological transfiguration of the created Adam.

Both of these connotations can be attested in Augustine's discourse. For reasons of clarity and conciseness, I will illustrate them in relation to one polyvalent motif of Augustine's thinking: interiority perceived as an *abyss*. For Augustine, the abyss is a metaphor of the unsearchable and impenetrable; more precisely, it illustrates the bottomless and limitless space of the inner man, of the hidden and secret inner life.<sup>38</sup>

On the one hand, the image of the abyss is evoked to express the darkness of the heart related to evil, corruption and death. For example, it points to the irrational human fall into the seduction of evil: "ecce cor meum, deus, ecce cor meum, quod miseratus es in imo abyssi – Such was my heart, o God, such was my heart. You had pity on it when it was at the bottom of the abyss" (*Conf.* 2. 4. 9, Chadwick, 29). Or it can be associated with the depth of death and of corruption which has engulfed the heart: "et dextera tua respiciens profunditatem mortis meae et a fundo cordis mei exhauriens abyssum corruptionis – Your right hand had regard to the depth of my dead condition, and from the bottom of my heart had drawn out a trough of corruption" (*Conf.* 9.1.1, Chadwick, 155). Furthermore, in Book 13 Augustine operates a transposition of the image of a cosmic deep inside the most intimate self, in order to show the abyss which engulfs the human, when he it is not open to the illuminating and forming activity of the Holy Spirit (*Conf.* 13. 8. 9).

On the other hand, the abyss of the human heart is not always linked to the darkness related to evil, ignorance, sin, absence of grace and remoteness from God. It can express the potentialities of the heart of a preacher of God's word, as well as its fragility, its lack of strength

against temptation. Such is the case in the long exegetical excursus which associates the human heart with an abyss in *Exposition of Psalm 41.13*. Here Augustine comments on the verse: “Deep calls to deep at the sound of your cataracts” (“*Abyssus abyssum inuocat, in uoce cataractarum tuarum*”). Interpreting the significance of the abyss as an unsearchable and incomprehensible deepness, Augustine identifies, through rhetorical questioning, the human heart with the abyss meant in the Psalm:

What then is the deep (*abyssus*) that is calling out there, and what the deep that is invoked? If ‘deep’ signifies profundity, surely the human heart is a deep abyss? Could anything be more profound? Human beings can speak, they can be observed as they use their limbs, and heard in their speech; but can we ever go to the bottom of one person’s thoughts, or see into anyone’s heart? (WSA III.16, 251).

The abyss of the heart expresses allegorically the ungraspable intentions, possibilities, activities, purposes and volitions of the heart (whether negative or positive). And Augustine extrapolates from the deepness of the heart to the profundity of the human being, bringing in another scriptural reference:

The profundity of a human being is surely referred to in a saying we find elsewhere: ‘A mortal will draw near to the heart’s depths, and God will be exalted.’ (Ps. 63:7-8 (64:6)). (*En. Ps.* 41.13, WSA III.16, 251).

Another fundamental point in Augustine supporting the apophatic retreat is the articulation of the created and the Uncreated within the heart visited by the grace. Thus, humanity and divinity can meet each other in the human heart within an ineffable encounter, as in a bridal chamber.<sup>39</sup> The paradigm of the union is given by the heart of Christ, named in *En. Ps.* 63.13: “*cor altum, cor secretum, cor abditum* – deep heart, secret heart, hidden heart”. In this *enarratio*, Augustine is interpreting the following verse: “a man will approach, with a deep heart; and God will be exalted.”<sup>40</sup> The heart can be the hosting place of incomprehensible, hidden divinity in the human being. It can name the depth of divinity within the human being, as in the divine-human person of Christ.

He drew near as a man, but deep was his heart. A secret heart was his, one that presented a human nature to human observers, but kept its godhead

hidden within. It concealed that form of God in which he is equal to the Father, and offered outwardly the form of a servant in which he is less than the Father. (*En. Ps.* 63.13, WSA III.17, 255).

The articulation of concealing and manifestation is characteristic of the union of the two natures in Christ. And this articulation finds its proper place in the heart. Obviously Augustine elevated the *topos* of the deepness and hiddenness of the heart to a new, Christological dimension. But this new signification reverberates back to re-evaluate the relationship between human weakness and divine power in the human heart, as Christ has assumed it to elevate it to a 'divine heart':

*A man will approach, with a deep heart, a secret heart, a heart hidden from sight (cor altum, cor secretum, cor abditum), revealing neither what it knew nor what it was. The Jews assumed that what met their eyes was all there was to him, so they killed this man with the deep heart; but in that divine heart (in corde diuino) God is exalted, for Christ was exalted by the power of his own majesty. (En. Ps. 16.13, WSA III.17, 255).*

This is an exceptional example of the hiddenness and profundity of the human heart: a heart in which humanity can be contemplated, a heart in which God himself can be seen.<sup>41</sup> We may consider Augustine's commentary as also implying that this deep heart is the ultimate model for the human heart, as Christ is the model for the human being, and the human being is made according to the image of the Son of God.<sup>42</sup> After all, the mystery of the person of Christ is established as an *exemplum* for the mystery of the human being in general, for the whole of humanity. In this sense, particularizing, the mystery of Christ's heart can be seen as an *exemplum*, as paradigmatic for the mystery of man's heart, called to a mystical (and sacramental) union with the divinity.<sup>43</sup>

From the model of the heart of Christ, we can speak also of the bridal chamber of the heart, as the privileged space of union between humanity and divinity. This can be constituted as a place of peace and rest. It becomes the place of the mystical union with the Wisdom of God (*sapientia Dei*), understood allegorically under the figure of the bride or sweet spouse indwelling deeply in the inner consciousness (*ad interiora conscientiae tuae*), the inner chamber of the heart (*cubiculum cordis*):



And if you have found there a spouse in whose company there is no bitterness, the very Wisdom of God (See Wis. 8:16), unite yourself with her, be at peace there within your bedroom (*in cubiculo tuo*), and do not allow the fumes of a bad conscience to drive you out. (*En. Ps.* 35.5, WSA III. 16, 76).<sup>44</sup>

In other passages with marital imagery, Christ is depicted as the bridegroom,<sup>45</sup> whereas the metaphor of the *cubiculum cordis* can be reiterated without necessarily bearing an explicit nuptial meaning, but rather in relation to the inner prayer.<sup>46</sup> The mystical union of divinity and humanity in man's heart can evolve from nuptial images to sacramental ones, and the secret inner chamber can be conceived instead as a place of cult, as an altar or sanctuary: "The great houses, the mighty tabernacles of God are the hearts of the saints - *Magnas domos, et magna tabernacula Dei, corda sanctorum...*" (*En. Ps.* 44, 23, WSA III. 16, 300).

The idea of mutual indwelling and mutual hiding in the hiddenness of the other, in the relationship established between God and man, while man is on the way to sanctification, occurs when Augustine comments on the verse: *You will hide them in the hidden recess of your face* (*Ps.* 30:21). God's face (*facies*), invisible and ineffable, will become man's proper shelter (*sinus*), abiding in him secretly:

Be a home for him, and he will be a home for you; let him dwell in you, and you will dwell in him. If you have welcomed him with your heart (*corde tuo*) in this age, he will welcome you with his face (*uultu suo*) when this age is past. (*En. Ps.* 30 (4). 8, WSA III. 15, 353).

It seems that the proper place of dwelling (*domus*) for the human is in "the hidden place of your countenance", and that the heart is the place of such hiding, so that those who are servants of Christ, despite being reviled by other people, "can flee to God in their hearts and have some initial hope of his sweetness" (*En. Ps.* 30 (4).8, WSA III.15, 353).

The correspondence that is established between the heart of man and the countenance of God, as places of secret indwelling, sweet sheltering, protective hiding, invites also to a double-faced apophaticism. If the hidden face of God requires an apophatic approach, so does the hidden heart of man. Moreover, the relationship of mutual hiding is also, in itself, transcending the possibilities of conceptual language, even though it

can be described in metaphors which will not exhaust its plenitude and deepness.

Continuing the semantics of bridal celebration and marital harmony, we should also mention the reference, in Book I of the *Confessions*, to Vergil's tragic couple Dido-Aeneas, in contrast to the true uplifting and transfiguring love of God, signified in metaphors of inner nourishment and marital union (*Conf.* 1.13.21).<sup>47</sup> The human heart, having as model the perfect union of humanity and divinity in the secret heart of Christ, discovering itself as a bridal chamber, through purification and illumination, is immersed in and flooded with divine light, *lumen cordis mei*. Man becomes an ineffable reflection of the ineffable and splendid light of God.

### **3. The effulgent reflection**

For Augustine, the human is radiant with the deepness of the divine life because it shares in the divine life. The language of reflection, linked to the imagery of light and illumination, brings us to a kind of foreshadowing of the effulgent brilliancy of the perfect manhood, which will be in the *eschaton*. The question is whether (and to what extent) the luminosity and radiance of the illumined man offers another thread for apophatic discourse in Augustine's anthropology.

In Augustine's terms, the notion of an enlightened soul brings up, at first glance, a theory of knowledge which aims to explain how the soul achieves a full vision of intelligible forms, ideas or reasons. Illumination can thus be taken in an epistemological sense and express the privilege of contemplating the forms, a privilege characterising the excellency of the rational soul, whereas excellency (as a potentiality, granted by the soul's nature) must be coupled with purity and proximity to God (as attained or actualised during human life):

Now among the things which have been created by God, the rational soul is the most excellent of all, and it is closest to God when it is pure. And in the measure that it has clung to him in love, in that measure, imbued in some way and illuminated by him with light, the soul discerns – not with physical eyes, but with its own highest parts in which lies its excellence, i.e., with its intelligence – those reasons whose vision brings to it full blessedness. These reasons (*rationes*), as we said, may be called ideas, or forms, or species, or reasons; and while it is the privilege of many to

name them what they wish, it is the privilege of very few to see them in their reality. (*De diu. qu.* 46, FC 70, 81).

However, beyond the epistemic sense, there is another, existential meaning of Augustine's notion of illumination. Sometimes, the human being is characterized not in the tension between light and darkness, as two contradictory ontological entities, but in the oscillation between two inner processes: being illumined and being darkened. Augustine seems to assume that the human soul has an inherent light. Therefore, the real question is not linked to the existence of this light, but to considering its diminution or its amplification. The essential criterion is the orientation of the inner view. If contemplation is turned towards the inner light as self-sufficient, the soul experiences a diminishing of the light. But if the vision is turned towards the source of the inner light, towards the transcendent light, the soul experiences an amplification, an overwhelming of the light: "Every soul is Zion, if it focuses its gaze in order to see the light which it is meant to see. If it concentrates on any light of its own it is darkened, but if it concentrates on God's light it is illumined." (*En. Ps.* 98.4, WSA III.18, p. 470).

We can read the second option described in this passage – namely illumination – as an example of the human being *mirroring the blinding and unchangeable light of God*. Consequently, we can ask here if illumination in itself doesn't call for an apophatic attitude before the reflection of the divine light in the human being. If illumination makes the human person bearer of the blinding light, if his innermost self becomes a reflection of the dazzling divine light, then this brilliant reflection itself becomes a blinding light which cannot be either directly contemplated, or completely grasped within inner perception. But how can we read Augustine's language of illumination in terms of a luminous reflection touching the realms of ineffability and incomprehensibility? And how does Augustine characterize the illuminated soul, the illuminated mind, the illuminated heart of man? My further analysis tries to identify in his characterisation elements of an anthropological apophaticism, starting from the ineffability of the effect of illumination in the human inner realm.

In *Io. Ep. Tr.* 1.4, God's light is "characterized" in the language of eminence raising it above all types of created light. This consideration is followed by a reflection on the possible transfiguration of the human being by embodying the likeness to that "much greater (...), much more excellent, much more super-eminent", "so much far beyond all else" light

of God. The human being may become a reflection of the super-eminent and dazzling divine light, it may be like this light, if it is illumined by this light. In order to experience the illumination, the human being should be oriented towards the divine light through knowledge of that light, but also through self-devotion:

And perhaps we shall be like it. If we know what that light is, and if we devote ourselves to it, so that we may be enlightened by it, because by ourselves we are darkness, and if we have been enlightened by it we can be light and not be confounded by it, since we are confounded in ourselves. (*Io. Ep. Tr.* 1.4, WSA III.14, 25).

The “overwhelming light” of the “supreme goodness” cannot be an object of grasping or contemplation for the “human mind with its weak eyesight”, but it can be gazed upon by the mind which has been rendered pure (“most purified”) and restored to its “full vigour” (*De Trinitate* 1.2.4, WSA I.5, 67). The vocabulary of surpassing impregnating the discourse about God meets the language of superlatives and fullness in speaking about the human mind. When reinvigorated, when perfected, the human mind has the capacity to look at the surpassing divine light.<sup>48</sup> But in the present predicament, there is still a certain inadequacy of the human mind to the fully revealed divine light (as charity), which means that the human mind can begin to discern or to guess the “glimmerings” of the Trinity, but in its weakness has to retreat before any continuous presence and full manifestation of the “inexpressible light” (*De Trinitate* 15.6.10; WSA I.5, 402).

Along with the enlightened soul and the enlightened mind, the heart also appears quite often in Augustine as a *locus* of illumination. And it is from the heart that the illumination radiates and transfigures, restores, brings to perfection the whole human being: “... whereas the true light which illuminates every human person sheds light in the heart, where alone understanding resides.” (*En. Ps.* 93.4, WSA III. 18, 377). The heart is seen not only as a passive bearer of light, as an enlightened space, but also as active bearer of Light, reflecting light back – as a “lamp” shining in the firmament of heaven (*En. Ps.* 93.6).<sup>49</sup> While the human person is enlightened, the heart undergoes an enlargement (*dilatatio cordis*), as grace (God) is being poured into the human heart (*En. Ps.* 4.2).<sup>50</sup> A shining heart will therefore not only be an enlarged heart, but also a purified heart. For only a purified heart can see and also behold the light of God, engaged

in an endless seeking<sup>51</sup> both for the ineffable light and for the hidden face of God. (*En. Ps.* 26 (2).15).<sup>52</sup>

Light, illumination, shining, brightness, invisibility, ineffability and certainty – all come together in Augustinian speech to characterize the relationship established between the human and the divine. Trying to explain how the light of knowledge sheds on the human mind some of its splendor, Augustine considers that the process of human sharing in that light is ineffable and invisible:

...this light, then, in which all the things are distinguished is not, of course, poured out like the brightness of this sun or of any bodily light through stretches of space and in every direction. And it does not illuminate our mind as if by a visible splendor but invisibly and ineffably, and it shines, nonetheless, in an intelligible manner. It is as certain for us as it makes certain for us what we see in accord with it. (*Ep.* 120.2.10, WSA II.2, 135).

Thus, the apophaticism developed from the phenomenon of illumination pertains to the impossibility to completely grasp, in (spiritual) vision, and to completely express, in words, what one might have visually perceived of the illumined core of the human being.

#### **4. Renewal through love**

I would like to examine now the various modes of Augustine's depicting the transformative power of love poured into human interiority and how these modes can be perceived as various steps in disclosing a deep human incomprehensibility, in relation to the incomprehensibility of the Divine Love.

In *Sermon* 23, the apophatic approach of God as Love is developed within, and departing from, the invitation to the believer to drink life from the fountain of life (*Sermo* 23,12). Afterwards, Augustine develops a pedagogy of discovering love, along with a phenomenology of love as immanent in the human being, along with but ungrasped by the human being:

Notice what you have been drinking, though. You have been drinking love. If you recognize it, God is love (1 Jn 4:8.16). So if you have been drinking love, tell me what place you have drunk it in. If you recognize it, if you have seen it, if you love it, what do you love it with? After all, whatever

you love rightly, you love with love. And how can you love anything with love if you don't love? So if you love it, what do you love it with? It comes to you, and you recognize it, and you see it. And it isn't seen in a place, not looked for with the eyes in your head in order to be loved more intensely. You don't hear it talking to you, and when it has come to you, you didn't perceive it coming in. Have you ever felt the feet of love walking about in your heart? So what is it? Whose is this thing which is already in you, and is not grasped by you? That's how you must learn to love God. (*Sermo* 23, 13, WSA III.2, 62).

In examining the very possibilities of human love, Augustine indicates that the source of love is already in the self, but is transcending the self. God as love is the already present indweller of the human heart, the mysterious guest of human interiority, the silent and invisible presence, inviting to and nourishing constantly a more intense and more vivid love. The inner space of the human being is at the same time attributed with and denied the category of "place". It is a place of drinking love, and it is a place of questioning and searching for the place of drinking love. The image of drinking offers a vivid metaphor for how love is assumed and interiorized in the human being. But it isn't a place of visibility, of seeing somebody entering the boundaries of interiority. Constituted as a space of spiritual perception for the movements of Love, it becomes a propaedeutic space for learning to love the incomprehensible (never grasped) love.

The idea of learning to love what is already in the human as the source of unspeakable, ever more intense love, is linked to the question of the human being engaging on the *via amoris*,<sup>53</sup> the only way to approach the unapproachable, to advance towards some experiential knowledge of the unknowable divinity. This *via amoris* engages in the complexities of the apophatic approach of God and the human being at the same time. It reflects the entanglement of the impossibilities to grasp the one who loves, the love by which one loves, the love which is loved, the love which grants the capacity of love within the one who loves, the love which actually loves within the loving one. This multiple-oriented impossibility of grasping is resolved in the possibility of feeling through the spiritual senses, naming the loving openness of transfiguring interiority: as ultimately (sensorially and conceptually) invisible, as "an invisible reality", God could be accessible only to the heart, to the open and active spiritual senses (purified "eye of the heart"), as charity (*Io. Ep. Tr.* 7.10, WSA III.14, 111).

The realm of spiritual perception opens a space of simultaneity and indistinctiveness, allowing for the mutual indwelling and abiding between

the human and the divine: “These aren’t distinct members occupying space, but he who has charity sees everything all at once with his understanding. Dwell there, and you shall be indwelled. Abide there, and you shall be abided in.” (*Io. Ep. Tr. 7.10, WSA III.14, 111-112*). The place of spiritual perceptions (which can bear the *name* of “the heart”) does not revendicate any space, and still this no-space place is the only adequate one for mutual indwelling. On the one hand, the paradigm of spiritual perception makes it possible to link divine charity to the superlative of sweetness, and to present love as to be tasted, embraced, taken, possessed: “Charity is being praised to you. If it is pleasing, have it, possess it. (...) Take it, embrace it: nothing is sweeter than it.” (*Io. Ep. Tr. 7.10, WSA III.14, 112*). On the other hand, the mutual indwelling is not defined through a space of settling, but through a place of movement, of progress. It is a dynamic indwelling of the pilgrim progressing in divine love, and of the divine love progressing in the restless human being: Here, the heart is again named as the place of examination and the agent of response to the degree of human progress in charity.

He tells how each person may examine himself as to how much progress charity has made in him, or rather as to how much he has made progress in charity. That is how charity is said to progress in you – that you progress in it. Ask, then, how much you have progressed in charity, and let your heart respond as to what it is, so that you may know the extent of your progress. (*Io. Ep. Tr. 9. 2, WSA III.14, 132*)

The restless heart has no place of settling until it rests in God. We may speak of a constant progress towards its final, eschatological settling in the divine,<sup>54</sup> who is Himself above all notions of settling and moving, of progressing or regressing.<sup>55</sup>

Perceiving God as charity opens to a kind of knowledge of God through tasting and taking. Here, taking should not be understood in terms of possession and conquering, but rather in terms of taking in, hosting, abiding. Thus the language of possessing is dissolved in the language of habitation, which has a double orientation, evoking the human as a home for the divine and the divine as a home for the human. Moreover, mutual indwelling is transformed in mutual progress: the incomprehensible love progresses in the self as far as the self progresses in the incomprehensible love. Thus, the self experiences a double opening towards incomprehensibility. Moreover, mutual progress opens to another

paradoxical language game: the human being *rests* in God, and also *moves* perpetually towards God. Thus, the self is seen in a present and prospective resting in its place of *requies*, in God as charity. At the same time, it is seen in a continuous progress in the one love which is above all progress, charity as Divinity.<sup>56</sup> As a sabbatical horizon, charity is the end of the human pilgrimage, it means finding and settling in the homeland. "What is the end? But my good is to cling to God (Ps. 73:28). You have clung to God, you have come to the end of the way, you shall abide in the homeland." (*Io. Ep. Tr.* 10.5, WSA III.14, 151).

Nonetheless, experiencing Love as an end is experiencing love as completeness. But fullness of charity means being full of God, either on a personal level, or on the level of community (*En. Ps.* 98, 4).<sup>57</sup> This means that the incomprehensibility of the divine charity is to be reflected in the person or the community of persons (city) full of divine charity. This incomprehensibility is articulated in the human being through the possibility of sonship with the Only-Begotten. Divine *dilectio* as incomprehensible (*incomprehensibilis*) and unchangeable transcends the human being, human creatureliness, human possibility to respond to divine love, being rooted before time and before the foundation of the world (*Io. Eu. Tr.* 110.6).<sup>58</sup> And this incomprehensible eternal love embraces the human being, and manifests itself, as taste of fullness, within the human being.

Drinking, embracing, tasting, progressing in, and resting in divine love are ways of transfiguration of the human person. This transfiguration is finally a transfiguration in beauty. Indeed, the human being is raised from being "loathsome and ugly" to being beautiful by God, who is "always beautiful, never ugly, never changeable". Thus, loving the supreme everlasting beauty makes the lover beautiful, and his beauty grows as his love grows: "How shall we be beautiful? By loving him who is always beautiful. Beauty grows in you to the extent that love grows, because charity itself is the soul's beauty." (*Io. Ep. Tr.* 9.9, WSA III.14, 141). But splendour and comeliness are granted to the human being only by Christ, who is, in his divinity, above all human concept of beauty.<sup>59</sup> Christ is the one by whom the human being can be made beautiful, as long as one is entirely turned towards him – in his contemplation, in his movement, in his love – and yearns to be beautiful so as to be loved by Christ:

Look to him by whom you have been made beautiful. May you be beautiful so that he may love you. But focus your attention entirely on him, run to



him, beseech his embraces, fear to part from him, so that there may be in you the chaste fear that abides forever. *Let us love because he loved us first.* (*Io. Ep. Tr.* 9.9, WSA III.14, 142).

Beauty and search of beauty open the topic of desire, where desire acts as gravitation and enflames as fire. Transfiguration through love presupposes a process of dislocation; the human being is resituated in a *place*, where he becomes both a sanctuary and a burning offering to God. Somehow, the gravitational force of love brings the human to its indefinable place: a place which is, paradoxically, no place, but a process, a tension, a longing – that of being aflame for God’s presence. Augustine puts forward a wide semantics of *ardor-burning-being aflame*, in which the metaphysical language of being, and the application of binary patterns (as subject-object, substance-attributes) have little to no relevance at all. Thus, a very strong negative anthropological approach is inherent in the *topos* of the purifying, consuming, transfiguring fire of the divine love.<sup>60</sup> The meaning and the plenitude of the human being lies in his “being kindled” by the ever-burning, never quenched fire (*Conf.* 10.29.40).

The deepest self is not the self that I discover (or rather fail to discover) while exploring myself, in introspection, but the self that I receive while “being enflamed by the divine fire”. In introspection, the self is unknowable because it presents itself as a puzzle, a riddle, an enigma, an *aporia* or an unsolved question.<sup>61</sup> In confessing the ardour of love, on the contrary, the self is unknowable because fully immersed in the fire of the divine love. These two levels of unknowability encapsulate each other: the aporetic self hides the mystery of the burning self, but also the incomprehensible kindling in the divine fire deepens the *aporia* of the uncontained self.<sup>62</sup> In Augustine’s spiritual imagery, the *topos* of the burning self (which I do not understand from my-self) illustrates the transfiguration of the human being into what he loves. Encountering the semantics of gift and donation, the fire enflames and transfigures those who receive it (*Conf.* 13.19.25), being related to a definition of love in terms of weight (*pondus meum, amor meus*), directing every being to its natural place.

My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire (*accendimur*) and carried upwards: we grow red hot (*inardescimus*) and ascend. We climb ‘the ascents in our heart’ (Ps. 83:6) and sing ‘the song of steps’ (Ps. 119:1). Lit by your fire, your good

fire, we grow red-hot and ascend, as we move upwards 'to the peace of Jerusalem'. (Ps. 121:6), (*Conf.* 13.9.10, Chadwick 278).

The enflaming love of God acts as an "inversed gravitation", supporting man's ascent towards God, and lifting him up to his resting place in the heavenly city.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the language of fire becomes utterly illustrative of the transfiguration of the human being, through love, into love, while constantly moving (ascending) to the place of the fullness of love.

### **5. Divinisation**

The language of transfiguration through love raises the theme of divinisation, of "becoming god". In the *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* 2.14, becoming god is related to the theme of the transforming power of love, as one becomes what he loves:

...because a person's love determines the person's quality. Do you love the earth? You will be earth. Do you love God? What shall I say? That you will be god? I don't dare to say this on my own. Let us listen to the scriptures: *I have said that you are gods and sons of the Most High.* (Ps. 82:6), (WSA III.14, 51).

Though rarely indicated in Augustine's writings by the technical term *deificare*, occurring 18 times, the concept of deification is essential for Augustine's theological view. "Deification is Augustine's supreme image of Christian salvation."<sup>64</sup>

Divinisation of the human is possible through the grace of God, not by acquiring the same nature of God or by being begotten from the divine substance.

It is quite obvious that God called human beings 'gods' in the sense that they were deified by his grace, not because they were begotten of his own substance. (...) If we have been made children of God, we have been made into gods; but we are such by the grace of him who adopts us, not because we are of the same nature as the one who begets. (*En. Ps.* 49.2, WSA III.16, 381).

Being made god by grace implies the vocabulary of participation, not that of essence or nature: "He calls them *gods* in virtue of participation, not

nature; they are gods by the grace through which he willed to deify them. How great must our God be, if he makes us gods?" (*En. Ps.* 94.6, WSA III.18, 414). Only God can be alone the source of deification, because he has Godhead of himself and not by participation (*En. Ps.* 49.2).

For Augustine, deification presupposes that human beings are given the "power to become children of God" (*En. Ps.* 49.2; *En. Ps.* 94.6).<sup>65</sup> In addition, the notion of divinisation is indeed Christo-centric; the sonship by grace is made possible through the Incarnation of the Son of God: "This is what God brings about. He transforms children of men into children of God, because he made the Son of God become the Son of Man." (*En. Ps.* 52.4.6, WSA III.17, 36). Christ participates in the human condition in order to make it possible for the human to participate in the divine life. "The Son of God was made a sharer in our mortal nature so that mortals might become sharers in his godhead." (*En. Ps.* 52, 4, 6, WSA III.17, 36-37).<sup>66</sup> The opposition is not between *humanitas* and *diuinitas*, but between *mortalitas* and *diuinitas*. Participation in the divinity of the Christ is possible because of his participation in our mortality.<sup>67</sup>

Deification is related to vision, to seeing God (*En. Ps.* 49.2),<sup>68</sup> but also to illumination, to the experience of the divine light perceived with the spiritual eyes: "He made us into gods because he shed his light upon our inner eyes." (*En. Ps.* 94.6, WSA III.18, 415). Divinisation means achieving likeness to God, and this likeness is realized in the human being by knowing God and by being transformed through this divine knowledge: "It follows that insofar as we know God we are like him, but never like him to the point of equality, since we never know him as much as he himself is." (*De Trinitate* 9.11.16, WSA I. 5, 279).

Ontologically speaking, deification does not erase the difference between Creator and created being, in Augustine's view: "the created being remains a created being, even though deified".<sup>69</sup> It means human participation not in the divine nature, but in the divine life. Deification consists in acquiring the "divine *modality of being* of persons in communion",<sup>70</sup> which is centred on infinite and unwavering charity. Becoming more and more similar to God means, eventually, realizing the fulfilment of human nature.<sup>71</sup> The intensification, the perfect realization of likeness to God is linked to progressing into the loving knowledge and knowing love of God:

By the same token when we know God we are indeed made better ourselves than we were before we knew him, especially when we like this knowledge

and appropriately love it and it becomes a word and a kind of likeness to God; yet it remains inferior to God because it is an inferior nature, our consciousness being a creature, but God the creator. (*De Trinitate* 9.11.16, WSA I.5, 280).

The question of deification, as well as the anthropological apophaticism implied by it, are intimately intertwined with the dynamics of man's progress towards the likeness of God and with the achievement of the perfect image of God in man. The apophatic approach to the human being is required by the fact that the human being bears the imprint of his absolute otherness, bears a constant reference to the Incomprehensible, being the unimaginable image of the One who has no image, the "icon of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).<sup>72</sup>

The more the human being enhances its likeness to its prototype, the more its incomprehensibility reaches its genuine meaning and deepness. Therefore, Augustine often speaks about the renovation of the human being in order to reach the perfection of the image: the image needs to be formed again and renewed, because it became defaced and tarnished, having lost its righteousness and holiness by sinning (*De Trinitate* 14.16.22).<sup>73</sup> Further on, in *De Trinitate* 14.19.25, Augustine considers that man's perfect likeness to the Trinity will be achieved in eternal life, after the resurrection. This eschatological understanding of the likeness corresponds to a state of contemplation of God face to face:

But the image which is being renewed in the spirit of the mind in the recognition of God, not outwardly, but inwardly from day to day, this image will be perfected in the vision that will then be face to face after the judgement, while now it makes progress through a puzzling reflection in a mirror. It is with reference to this perfection that we shall understand the words, *We shall be like him because we shall see him as he is* (1 John 3:2). (*De Trinitate* 14.19.25, WSA I.5, 391).<sup>74</sup>

Since the perfect likeness – and so deification – of the human is eschatologically achieved, after the resurrection, "deification is a concept that cannot be analysed according to its fulfilment".<sup>75</sup> So it opens the space of silence on what we cannot speak about.

The nearer man gets to his Creator, the more he borrows from His ineffable presence; the more man advances in the knowledge of God, the more he is shaped in the image of the Divine; the more resplendent

becomes the image of the divine in man, the more intimately he participates in the spiritual life that works the renewal and finally the deification of man. Augustine speaks of the accomplishment of the spiritual man, possessing full and unerring power of judgement:

So man 'is renewed in the knowledge of God after the image of Him who created Him' (*renouatus in agnitione Dei secundum imagine eius, qui creauit eum* – Col. 3:10). Being made spiritual, 'he judges all things' (that is, of course, things that need to be judged), 'but he himself is judged by no one.' (1 Cor. 2:15), (*Conf.* 13.22.32, Chadwick, 292).

Consequently, as in the anthropological reflection of Gregory of Nyssa (*De hominis opificio*)<sup>76</sup> and Diadochus of Photike (*One Hundred Gnostic Chapters*),<sup>77</sup> according to Augustine, the mystery of the human being grows more intense as man progresses in the likeness with his divine Archetype.

#### IV. Final Remarks and Conclusions

In the light of this analysis, apophaticism for Augustine is not a mere exercise of negating predicates adopted in counterbalance to the cataphatic way of discourse, namely to the mode of affirmative predication of attributes. It represents rather a spiritual attitude, growing within the doxological approach of the divine mystery, which leads implicitly to an intensified awareness of the human mystery. One dimension of apophaticism lies in underlining the ineffability of the mystery, by denying that the language has any possibility to encompass the full and deep reality of the mystery. Even in the use of negation, superlative, paradox, or metaphor, there is a poignant awareness of the inadequacy of language to convey a literally undepictable hiddenness. Another dimension of apophaticism lies in the fundamental unknowability or incomprehensibility of the mystery – through concepts, categories, or images. However, in this framework of radical incomprehensibility is inscribed the possibility of a privileged access – granted in the opening of the spiritual senses, in a loving approach to the Unapproachable.

In consequence, I argue that it is possible to speak of elements or foundations of a negative anthropology in Augustine. It is not a systematic approach, but it infuses and irrigates his whole thought. Without having a definite distinction of *via negativa* and *via eminentiae* when speaking of

the mystery of the human being, Augustine lays the grounds for both of them in theoretical considerations, exegetical reflections and performative speech acts (confession, praise) embedded in his writings.

Human incomprehensibility is rooted *in* and depends *on* divine incomprehensibility in at least three possible ways: by derivation (the problematic of image and likeness),<sup>78</sup> by participation (divinisation), by transfiguration (in light, through burning, within love).

In comparison to divine apophaticism, the specificity of human apophaticism consists in several layers of unknowability, modelled on man's created being ascending to the Uncreated. The mystery of the human being remains in terms of enigma and *quaestio*. But it also remains in terms of hosting the most secret God, of ineffably bearing the reflection of the ineffable Light, of the overwhelming and unfathomable fullness of love. The unknowable self, as opaqueness to the bordered, impure, ignorant mind, meets the unknowable self, as an enigma impossible to be decrypted or deciphered exclusively within the self, without any reference to the other than the self. Deeper than these two dimensions of unknowability, the mystery of the human being grows in impenetrability because of the increasing resemblance to the incomprehensible God. By its endless dynamic, ineffability and unfathomable deepness, the relationship between man and God invites in itself an apophatic stance. Thus, the apophaticism triggered by this relationship contributes to the incomprehensibility of the human person, whose mystery is fully and most beautifully realized only in (and starting from) this relationship.

The labyrinth of inner obscurity, the gift of human inaccessibility, the unscrutability of human fragility, the ungrasped beauty growing secretly in the endless longing for the divine are various facets of man's hiddenness. The mystery of the human being is called to share in the incomprehensibility of the Selfsame, in *Idipsum*<sup>79</sup> – the mysterious name of *Deus secretissimus*.

## Abbreviations

*Conf.* – *Confessiones*

*De ciu. Dei* – *De ciuitate Dei*

*De diu. qu.* – *De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*

*De Gen. ad. litt.* – *De Genesi ad litteram*

*En. Ps.* – *Enarrationes in Psalmos*

*Io. Ep. tr.* – *In Ioannis Epistolam ad Parthos tractatus*

*Io. Eu. tr.* – *In Ioannis Euangelium tractatus*

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Charles Couturier, "La structure métaphysique de l'homme d'après saint Augustin", in *Augustinus Magister*, Communications I, Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1954, pp. 543-550.
- <sup>2</sup> Goulven Madec, *Lectures augustiniennes*, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 2001, in particular: "La chaire chrétienne". Saint Augustin et la corporalité, pp. 258-270.
- <sup>3</sup> Isabelle Koch, "Y a-t-il une intériorité de l'intériorité chez Augustin?", in *Le moi et l'intériorité*, Gwenaëlle Aubry & Frédérique Idelfonse (eds.), Vrin, Paris, 2008.
- <sup>4</sup> The hypothesis of a possible synonymous use of the terms *cor* and *mens* is proposed by certain scholars such as: Isabelle Bochet, "Cœur", in *Encyclopédie Saint Augustin. La Méditerranée et l'Europe. IVe – XXIe siècle*, dir. Allan D. Fitzgerald, Marie-Anne Vannier, Cerf, Paris, 2005, pp. 277, 279-280; Goulven Madec, "Cor", in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, Cornelius Mayer (ed.), vol. II, Schwabe, Basel, 1996-2002, col. 2; *Lectures augustiniennes*, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 2001, p. 136. For the integration of the duality *cor-mens* in the wider semantic sphere of *anima-animus-cormens*, see: Edgardo de la Peza, *El significado de "cor" en San Agustín*, Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1962, p. 72.
- <sup>5</sup> Jean-Louis Chrétien, "Des membres du cœur aux organes de l'âme", in *Symbolique du corps. La tradition chrétienne du "Cantique des Cantiques"*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2005, pp. 17-20; Jean Pépin, "Augustin et Origène sur les *sensus interiores*", in *Sensus-Sensatio. VIII Colloquio Internazionale, Roma, 6-8 gennaio 1995*, atti cura di M. L. Bianchi, Leo S. Olschki Editore, Firenze, 1996, pp. 11-23; M. -F. Berrouard, *Note complémentaire* 14. "Les sens du coeur", BA 72, pp. 736-738. And recently: Matthew R. Lootens, "Augustine", in *The Spiritual Senses. Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, Paul L. Gavrilyuk, Sarah Coakley (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 56-70. In particular, for sight: Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's *De Trinitate* and *Confessions*", in *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 63, nr. 2, 1983, pp. 125-142.
- <sup>6</sup> Gareth B. Matthews, "The Inner Man", in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1967, pp. 166-172; Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban, "Devenirea omului interior", in *Iter Sapientiae. Studii patristice și medievale*, Bogdan et Miruna Tătaru-Cazaban, Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu Lăpuș, 2003, pp. 61-170; Aimé Solignac, "Homme intérieur. Augustin", in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire*, Fascicules XLVI-XLVII, Beauchesne, Paris, 1969, col. 655-658.
- <sup>7</sup> Paul Agaësse, *L'anthropologie chrétienne selon Saint Augustin. Image, Liberté, Péché et Grâce*, Médiasèvres, 2004.



- <sup>8</sup> Isabelle Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu*, Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1982.
- <sup>9</sup> Margaret R. Miles, *Desire and Delight. A New Reading of Augustine's Confessions*, Crossroad, New York, 1992. Isabelle Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu*, pp. 322-334 ("La Délectation").
- <sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Le concept d'amour chez Augustin. Essai d'interprétation philosophique*, Payot & Rivages, Paris, 1999; John Burnaby, *Amor Dei. A Study of the Religion of Saint Augustine*, The Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1991; Lee C. Barrett, *Eros and Self-Emptying. The Intersections of Augustine and Kirkegaard*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, UK, 2013. For the theme of the gift of the Holy Spirit, related to the quotations of Rom. 5:5 ("*quia caritas Dei difussa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sactum, qui datur est nobis*"), see: Anne-Marie la Bonnardière, "Le verset paulinien Rom. V, 5 dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin", in *Augustinus Magister. Communications II*, Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1954, pp. 657-665.
- <sup>11</sup> Gareth B. Matthews, *Thought's Ego in Augustine and Descartes*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 1992, pp. 29-38; John M. Rist, *Augustine. Ancient Thought Baptized*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 87-88 (identifies self-knowledge and *cogito*); Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader. Meditation, Self-knowledge and the Ethics of Interpretation*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England, 1996, pp. 271-272 (treats self-knowledge only in relationship to the mind and roots the whole problematic in the notion of intentionality). For a reevaluation of the Augustinian *cogito*, see Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu de soi. L'approche de Saint Augustin*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2008, pp. 89-97.
- <sup>12</sup> Goulven Madec, *Chez Augustin*, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1998, p. 64.
- <sup>13</sup> Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Saint Augustin et les actes de parole*, PUF, Paris, 2002 (chapitre XI. "Confesser", pp. 121-135).
- <sup>14</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu de soi. L'approche de Saint Augustin*, pp. 39-40.
- <sup>15</sup> Andrew Louth associates "the permanent place of wonder" with the "essentially irreducible character of mystery" (*Discerning the Mystery. An Essay on the Nature of Theology*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 144). He speaks of the "ultimate mystery of God" and of the mystery of the human being as made in the image and likeness of God, and presents the theological character of mystery as something which "challenges us", "questions us", "awakens a sense of wondering awe" (pp. 145-147).
- <sup>16</sup> I refer to the Latin text for expressing the wondering before the incomprehensible name and overwhelmingly ineffable presence of God: "Magnum ecce Est, magnum Est! Ad hoc homo quid est? Ad illud tam magnum Est, homo quid est, quidquid est? Quis apprehendat illud esse?"

- quis eius particeps fiat? quis anhelet? quis aspiret? quis ibi se esse posse praesumat? Noli desperare, humana fragilitas. *Ego sum, inquit: Deus Abraham, et Deus Isaac, et Deus Iacob.* Audisti quid sim apud me, audi et quid sim propter te." (*En. Ps.* 101.2.10).
- 17 John Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, pp. 96-97.
- 18 Mary Noreen Rita Marrocco, *Participation in the Divine Life in St. Augustine's De Trinitate and Selected Contemporary Homiletic Discourses*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 2000.
- 19 Deirdre Carabine proposes an interpretation of the passage in the light of an understanding of God as "fullness of being" and "absolutely transcendent being", from which Augustine would have derived the unknowability of God. His interpretation is situated in the interplay of contradictions imposed by the ontological divide and is integrated in an exegesis of Augustine's negative theology exclusively, with little regard to the implications for Augustine's anthropology (*The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena*, Peeters/Eerdmans, Louvain, 1995, Chapter 9. "Saint Augustine. A Negative Theology?", pp. 266-7). For example: "the eternity and immutability of God cannot be known by a finite and mutable mind." (p. 267.)
- 20 The scholarly reflection on apophatic theology in Augustine has been encouraged by V. Lossky's identification of elements of negative theology in Augustine's writings: "Plus modeste, l'apophase est cependant assez marquée chez Saint Augustin pour qu'on puisse parler au moins d'éléments de théologie négative dans sa pensée religieuse." (Vladimir Lossky, "Les éléments de théologie négative dans la pensée de saint Augustin", in *Augustinus Magister, Communications I*, Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1954, p. 576).
- 21 The two terms are defined as synonymous in the very interesting conceptual analysis proposed by Silvia L.Y.N. Jonas in her thesis: *The metaphysics of ineffability*, B.Phil. Thesis in Philosophy, University of Oxford, Oxford, 2010.
- 22 "ineffabilis est quaedam ... communio". For commentary, see Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p. 25.
- 23 "But now hold with unshakable faith that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are a trinity, and that there is, nonetheless, one God, not that the divinity is common to these as if it were a fourth, but that it is itself the ineffably inseparable Trinity" (WSA II.2, 136).
- 24 D. Carabine, *The Unknown God*, p. 264: "Even at the end of his great theological excursion into the ineffable realms of trinitarian exegesis, Augustine again admits the poverty of his thought and the attempt to express his thought."
- 25 For commentary, see also Lewis Ayres, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

- <sup>26</sup> For the difficulty of naming the nameless, see Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu de soi*, p. 389 sqq. (“Addition. *Idipsum* ou le nom de Dieu”).
- <sup>27</sup> Book I of *De doctrina christiana* was written around 396, shortly after Augustine had become a bishop (Introduction, WSA I.11, p. 11). Commentary in William Franke (ed.), *On What Cannot be Said. Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature and the Arts*, vol. 1, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2007, p. 153. See also: Deirdre Carabine, “Negative Theology in the Thought of Saint Augustine”, *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, tome 59, 1992, p. 9.
- <sup>28</sup> See commentary of D. Carabine, *The Unknown God*, p. 269. In the denial of the applicability of Aristotelian categories, Augustine uses a kind of juxtaposition of negative and positive discourse, a dialectical method of thought which will become characteristic for later writers embracing negative theology, such as Eriugena.
- <sup>29</sup> This can be considered in the light of an aphaeretic approach to God, suggesting that it is better to approach the ineffable and incomprehensible God by knowing “what he is not” (*quid non sit*). Cf. *En. Ps.* 85.12 (*dicere, quid non sit*); *Io.Eu.tr.* 23.9-10 (*scire, quid non sit*). This mode of discourse specific to the negative theology can be named *via remotionis* (D. Carabine, *The Unknown God*, p. 268 ff.)
- <sup>30</sup> For a commentary on these passages of *Sermo* 117, with a personal translation, see Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, Duckworth, London, 1987, pp. 214-215. The passages were interpreted as part of a negative theology in V. Lossky’s study: “c’est le terme de l’ignorance apophatique, la lumière de la vraie connaissance atteinte, sans être acquise, dans un contact passager du présent toujours fuyant de la pensée créée avec le Présent éternel de Dieu...” (“Les éléments de théologie négative dans la pensée de saint Augustin”, p. 380). Commentaries to be found also in the collection of W. Franke, *On What cannot be said*, p. 152, and in Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu du soi*, p. 392.
- <sup>31</sup> The negative theology has to be counterbalanced and continued by a cultic use of discourse, it ends in and opens to praise: “And yet, while nothing really worthy of God can be said about him (*cum de illo nihil digne dici possit*), he has accepted the homage of human voices, and has wished us to rejoice in praising him with our words. That is fact is what is meant by calling Him God. Not, of course, that with the sound made by this one syllable any knowledge of him is achieved; but still, all those who know the English language are moved, when this sound reaches their ears, to reflecting upon some most exalted and immortal nature (*mouet ad cogitandam excellentissimam quamdam immortalemque naturam*).” (*De doctrina christiana* I.6.6, WSA I.11, 109). For the importance of praise (*laudare*), while discovering God as the one to be praised par excellence (*laudabilis valde*), see the beginning

- and the end of the *Confessions* (1.1.1; 13.33.48). Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu de soi*, p. 392.
- <sup>32</sup> See the list of terms with negative prefix used by Augustine in relation to God (*incomprehensibilis, inexplicabilis, ineffabilis, impenetrabilis, invisibilis, incomprehensibilis*) in Paul van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God: Augustine as a Negative Theologian*, Peeters, Leuven, 2011, p. 8, footnote 19. This series can be compared to the list of similar terms proposed by the Greek tradition of apophatic theology: see Ysabel de Andia, “Négative (Théologie)”, in *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, Jean-Yves Lacoste (dir.), Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1998, pp. 791-795; and the first chapter “A brief Survey of Negative Theology in the Hellenistic and Patristic Periods” of Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God. Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Anthropology*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2004, pp. 3-26.
- <sup>33</sup> Vladimir Lossky considers that this phrasing “oblige la pensée de rejeter tout ce qu’il n’est pas.” (“Les éléments de théologie négative dans la pensée de saint Augustin”, p. 578). For a development of Augustine’s anthropology starting from this particular phrase see Charles T. Mathewes, “Augustinian Anthropology: *Interior intimo meo*”, in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1999, pp. 195-221.
- <sup>34</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu de soi*, pp. 389-414, especially 395-396; Paul Van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God*, p. 83.
- <sup>35</sup> For the negative anthropology being intimately related and founded by negative theology, see Willemien Otten, “In The Shadow Of The Divine: Negative Theology And Negative Anthropology in Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius and Eriugena”, *Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 40, Issue 4, 1999, pp. 438-456.
- <sup>36</sup> See, for example, Edgardo de la Peza, *El significado de “cor” en San Agustín*, Études Augustiniennes, Paris, 1962; Anton Maxsein, *Philosophia cordis. Das Wesen der Personalität bei Augustinus*, Otto Müller Verlag, Salzburg, 1966; Eric Dubreucq, *Le cœur et l’écriture chez Saint Augustin. Enquête sur le rapport à soi dans les Confessions*, Septentrion Presses Universitaires, Paris, 2003; Isabelle Bochet, “Cœur”, in *Encyclopédie Saint Augustin. La Méditerranée et l’Europe. IVe – XXIe siècle*, dir. Allan D. Fitzgerald, Marie-Anne Vannier, Cerf, Paris, 2005, pp. 279-280; Goulven Madec, “Cor”, in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, Cornelius Mayer (ed.), vol. II, Schwabe, Basel, col. 1-6; Daniel Austin Napier, *En Route to the Confessions: the Roots and Development of Augustine’s Philosophical Anthropology*, Peeters, Leuven, 2013, pp. 71-114.
- <sup>37</sup> Jean-Luc Marion transforms this unknowability in the *privilege* of the human being: “*Mihi magna quaestio factus sum: The Privilege of Unknowing*”, in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 85, No. 1, 2005, pp. 1-24.

- 38 On the abyssal dimensions of the interiority or of the heart see: Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, pp. 173-175; Anton Maxsein, *op. cit.*, "Cor als Organ der menschlichen Verhülltheit und Verborgenheit", p. 152 sqq.
- 39 For the bridal imagery, see also: Isabelle Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu*, pp. 383-387.
- 40 We may discuss the sense of the preposition preceding the word *cor*, which gives a hint about whose heart the Psalm speaks. "the Vulgate here has: 'to a deep heart'. The Hebrew is corrupt and unintelligible, but it seems likely that the original reference was to the heart of the schemers. However, the Septuagint and Augustine's Latin version had 'and a deep heart', which he interprets as a reference to Christ's hidden divinity." (WSA III.17, p. 255, footnote 19).
- 41 "So he approached, a man indeed, though deep of heart. Contemplate his humanity in that deep heart; and in the same heart also discern, if you can, to the utmost that you can, God himself (*Intuere hominem in corde alto: uide quantum potes, si potes, et Deum in corde alto*). He approached as a man, but he was also God. He was about to suffer because he willed it, and he was to give an example to the weak (*quia exemplum praebiturus infirmis*)." (*En. Ps.* 63.14, WSA III.17, p. 256).
- 42 The human being is considered in earlier works after the image of the Son (393-4), later as the image of the Trinity (426-27). This change is obvious in *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus* 16, between paragraphs 57-60 and paragraphs 61-62. See Isabelle Bochet, "Le statut de l'image dans la pensée augustinienne", *Archives de philosophie*, tome 72, 2/2009, pp. 259-260 (especially footnote 55, p. 260).
- 43 For the meanings and relationships between *exemplum*, *sacramentum* and *mysterium* in Augustine, see: B. Studer, "'Sacramentum et exemplum' chez Saint Augustine", in *Studia Patristica* 16, 1985, pp. 570-588; C. Coutourier, "'Sacramentum' et 'mysterium' dans l'oeuvre de Saint Augustin", in *Études Augustiniennes*, Aubier, Paris, 1953, pp. 161-332. Cf. also Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 168: starting from *De trinitate* 4.3.5, Christ's work is presented as an *exemplum* for the "outer man", and simultaneously as a *sacramentum* for the "inner man".
- 44 Other two associations between *cor* and *cubiculum* occur in the same *En. Ps.* 35.5 (WSA III.16, 74-75).
- 45 *Conf.* 4.12.19; 13.13.14; *Io. Eu. tr.* 8.4; *En. Ps.* 44.25; *Sermo* 184.2.
- 46 See, for example, *En. Ps.* 141.3 or *Io. Eu. Tr.* 10.1.
- 47 "quid enim miserius misero non miserante se ipsum et flente Didonis mortem, quae fiebat amando Aenean, non flente autem mortem suam, quae fiebat non amando te, Deus, lumen cordis mei et panis oris intus animae meae et uirtus maritans mentem meam et sinum cogitationis meae?" – "What is more pitiable than a wretch without pity for himself who weeps over the death of

- Dido dying for love for Aeneas, but not weeping over himself dying for his lack of love for you, my God, light of my heart, bread of the inner mouth of my soul, the power which begets life in my mind and in the innermost recesses of my thinking." (Chadwick, 15-16).
- 48 For alternative translation and commentary see O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, p. 212. The vision vocabulary (the eye of the mind) is interwoven with metaphors of nourishment, suggesting the restoration of the full capacity of spiritual perception.
- 49 "When we keep our hearts lifted high, our very hearts are lamps; they shine in heaven and are not quenched by the darkness below them." (*En. Ps.* 93.6, WSA III.18, 379-380) And also: "Let our hearts be in the book, then, for if our hearts are in God's book, they are in the firmament of heaven. If your heart is there, let it shine from there, and then it will not be shaken by iniquities below it." (*En. Ps.* 93.6, WSA III.18, 380).
- 50 "...for this was another way of showing what it means to have our heart enlarged, to have God poured into our hearts already: it means that we can converse inwardly with him. This is quite reasonably understood to refer to a person who believes in Christ and has been enlightened." (*En. Ps.* 4,2, WSA III.15, 86).
- 51 On progressing in the discovery of the incomprehensible, on the endless process of searching-finding God, see Isabelle Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu*, pp. 171-174.
- 52 "To whom does our heart say, *I have sought your face*? Only to him who offers himself to the eyes of the heart. One kind of light is what the eyes of your flesh seek, the other is sought by the eyes of the heart. But you want to behold the light which is seen by the eyes of the heart, because God is that light itself. God is light, says John, and in him there is no darkness at all (1 Jon 1:5). Do you aspire to see that light? Make your eye clean, so that you can see it, because *blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.* (*Mt 5:8*)" (*En. Ps.* 26 (2).15, WSA III.15, 283-4).
- 53 D. Carabine, *The Unknown God*, pp. 272-276.
- 54 *Conf.* 1.1.1: the motif of the *inquietum cor*. For interpretation, see L. C. Barrett, *Eros and Self-Emptying*, p. 68; Juhn Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, p. 98.
- 55 "For, if *God is charity*, God neither progresses nor regresses." (*Io. Ep. Tr.* 9. 2, WSA III.14, 132).
- 56 See also Jean-Luc Marion, "Resting, moving, loving: The Access to the Self according to Saint Augustine", *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 91, No. 1, 2011, pp. 32-34.
- 57 "But God himself is this charity, for Scripture says unambiguously, *God is charity* (1 John 4: 8). Any person who is full of charity is therefore full of God, and when many persons are full of charity, they make a city for God." (*En. Ps.* 98.4, WSA III.18, 470).

- 58 “Therefore, the love by which God loves is incomprehensible and unchangeable. For he did not begin to love us from the time when we were reconciled to him through the blood of his Son; but before the foundation of the world he loved us, that we, too, might be his sons together with his Only-Begotten, before we were anything at all.” (*Io. Eu. Tr.* 110.6; FC 90, 296).
- 59 Augustine quotes, as referring to Christ: *Splendid in form beyond all sons of men, grace is poured forth on your lips* (Ps 45:2) in *Io. Ep. Tr.* 9.9.
- 60 See *Conf.* 3.4.8, *Conf.* 4.7.12, *Conf.* 4.12.19, *Conf.* 11.29.39, *Conf.* 12.18.27, *Sermo* 361.2.
- 61 The self appears as “magna quaestio” (*Conf.* 4.4.9) or as “quaestio” (*Conf.* 10.33.50). Alternatively, see the puzzle of the memory, identified with the mind and the self (*Conf.* 10.17.26).
- 62 For the *aporia* of the uncontained self, in its first presentation, see: *Conf.* 10.8.15.
- 63 For the ancient sources, but also for the originality of Augustine’s development on love in terms of weight (*pondus*), see Jean-Luc Marion, “Resting, moving, loving”, pp. 34-39.
- 64 David Vincent Meconi, *The One Christ: St Augustine’s Theology of Deification*, Catholic University of America Press, 2013, p. 236.
- 65 “Moreover he who justifies is the same as he who deifies, because by justifying us he made us sons and daughters of God: he gave them power to become children of God (John 1:12).” (*En. Ps.* 49.2, WSA III.16, 381). And: “The true God makes gods of those who believe in Him, for he has given them power to become children of God.” (*En. Ps.* 94.6, WSA III.18, 415).
- 66 Similar phrasing is found in *En. Ps.* 66, 9: “Fecit eum participem prius mortalitatem nostrae, ut crederemus nos esse posse participes diuinitatis eius.” See Isabelle Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu*, p. 386.
- 67 “Deification is therefore by consequence of humanity being assumed by God in the Incarnation.” (Gerald Bonner, “Deificare”, in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, Cornelius Mayer (ed.), Schwabe and Co, Basel, 1996, vol. II, col. 265).
- 68 “The only-begotten Son is like him by being born of him; we become like him by seeing him.” (*En. Ps.* 49.2, WSA III.16, p. 381)
- 69 Gerald Bonner, *art. cit.*, col. 266.
- 70 Paul McPartlan, “Sainteté” (c. “Déification”), in *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1998, p. 1046.
- 71 *Idem.*
- 72 See Jean-Luc Marion, “Resting, moving, loving”, p. 31: “Man remains unimaginable, since formed in the image of He who admits none, incomprehensible because formed in the resemblance of He who admits no comprehension.”

- 73 "And thus the image begins to be reformed by him who formed it in the first place. It cannot reform itself in the way it was able to deform itself. As he says elsewhere, *Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man who was created according to God in justice and the holiness of truth* (Eph 4:23). 'Created according to God' means the same as 'to the image of God' in another text. But by sinning man lost justice and the holiness of truth, and thus the image became deformed and discoloured; he gets those qualities back again when it is reformed and renovated." (WSA III.5, 388).
- 74 Other passages from *De Trinitate* convey mainly the same idea, mentioning the transformation of the image brought by the vision of God, which makes the human be like God (see *De Trinitate* 15.11.20; 15.11.21).
- 75 Jonathan D. Teubner, "Review: *The One Christ: St Augustine's Theology of Deification*, David Vincent Meconi", in *Reviews in Religion & Theology*, Volume 21, Issue 2, 2014, p. 245.
- 76 *On the Making of Man* 11.3-4, *Patrologia Graeca* 44: 156b, *apud* Jean-Luc Marion, "Resting, moving, loving", p. 31. In Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic treatises, etc.*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, pp. 396-97.
- 77 Diadoque de Photicé, *Cent chapitres gnostiques*, in *Oeuvres spirituelles*, Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes de Édouard des Places, Sources Chrétiennes nr. 5 bis, Cerf, Paris, 1955, ch. 89, pp. 149-150.
- 78 Jean-Luc Marion, "Resting, Moving, loving", p. 31; "The Privilege of Unknowing", p. 17.
- 79 For an interpretation of *Idipsum* as name of the nameless God, in the framework of Augustine's negative theology, see: Jean-Luc Marion, "*Idipsum*: The Name of God according to Augustine", in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. by Aristotle Papanikolaou and George E. Demacopoulos, St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, Crestwood, New York, 2008, pp. 167-190. For the question of human sharing in the *Idipsum*, see *En. Ps.* 4.9, where the incorruptible and immortal condition is an expression of the human indwelling or resting in the *Idipsum*, or *En. Ps.* 121.5, where sharing in the *Idipsum* is possible through being rooted in the heavenly Jerusalem. For the association of *Idipsum* with Christ and the mystery of Incarnation, see Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 205. For the interpretation of three mystical experiences related to the *Idipsum* and presented in *Conf.* 7.10.16, 9.4.11, 9.10.23-26, see Takeshi Kato, "*Idipsum* in Augustine's *Confessions*", in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 2, edited by Pauline Allen, Wendy Mayer and Lawrence Cross, Australian Catholic University, Queensland, 1999, pp. 217-225.



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